

Message Text

SECRET

PAGE 01 NOUAKC 00900 061217Z
ACTION SS-25

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 SSO-00 INRE-00 NSCE-00 CIAE-00 /026 W
-----015937 061248Z /50

P R 041420Z APR 78
FM AMEMBASSY NOUAKCHOTT
TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 9269
INFO RUX RS/AMEMBASSY ALGIERS 780
AMEMBASSY DAKAR
AMEMBASSY MADRID
AMEMBASSY PARIS
AMEMBASSY RABAT
USMISSION USUN NY

S E C R E T NOUAKCHOTT 900

EXDIS

C O R R E C T E D C O P Y (TEXT--PARA FOUR LINE TWO ADDED)

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: MASS, PEPR, AG, MO, MR, FR, SP, SS
SUBJECT: ALGERIAN SUGGESTION OF U.S. INVOLVEMENT IN A SAHARA
MEDIATION EFFORT

REF: (A) NOUAKCHOTT 781, (B) NOUAKCHOTT 744, (C) ALGIERS 1023
(D) RABAT 1940

1. THE GOVERNMENT OF MAURITANIA (GIRM) HAS MADE IT CLEAR ON
SEVERAL OCCASIONS THAT IT WOULD WELCOME TALKS THAT COULD LEAD TO
POLITICAL SETTLEMENT OF THE SAHARA DISPUTE. IT RECOGNIZES
THAT THE ALTERNATIVE IS COSTLY INDEFINITE MILITARY STALEMATE.
AS REPORTED IN REFTEL B, THE GIRM WOULD HAVE NO OBJECTION TO
INCLUSION OF POLISARIO FIGURES IN ANY SUCH TALKS PROVIDED THAT
THEY WERE RECOGNIZED AS REPRESENTING THE REFUGEE POPULATION IN
TINDOUF AND NOT THE POLISARIO FRONT PER SE OR THE SAHARA
DEMOCRATIC ARAB REPUBLIC (SDAR). ALTHOUGH A FAR CRY FROM THE
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ALGERIAN SUGGESTION RE DIRECT POLISARIO FRONT PARTICIPATION
(PRESUMABLY AS AN EQUAL PARTNER) IN PACE TALKS, IT COULD BE
CONSTRUED AS INDICATIVE OF A WILLINGNESS TO BACK AWAY FROM ITS
PREVIOUSLY UNCOMPROMISING HARD-LINE POSITION.

2. AS THOUGH THE PUT THE FOREGOING IN SOME PERSPECTIVE, FONMIN
MOUKNASS IN NINETY-MINUTE TALK WITH CONGRESSMAN WHALEN ON

MARCH 29 REITERATED GIRM CONTENTION THAT MEMBERS OF THE WESTERN SAHARA TRIBES THAT INHABITATED PRE-1975 MADRID ACCORD'S SPANISH SAHARA MAKE UP NO MORE REPEAT NOMORE THAN FIVE PERCENT OF THE POLISARIO FRONT; THE REMAINING NINETY-FIVE PERCENT HE STATED ARE DISSIDENT MAURITANIANS AND MOROCCANS AND QUOTE LARGE BANDS OF ALGERIANS AND MALIANS UNQUOTE.

3. MAURITANIAN CHIEF OF PROTOCOL TOLD EMBOFF APRIL 1 THAT ALTHOUGH, TO HIS KNOWLEDGE, THERE WAS NO DIRECT CONTACT AT THIS TIME BETWEEN ALGERIA, MOROCCO AND MAURITANIA ON THE WESTERN SAHARA ISSUE, GIRM CONTINUES TO LOOK FOR A NEGOTIATED SETTLEMENT. HE ALLUDED TO POSSIBLE THIRD PARTY INTERVENTIONS BY EXPRESSING SATISFACTION THAT COUNTRIES SUCH AS TOGO WHO ORIGINALLY RECOGNIZED THE SDAR, NOW UNDERSTAND COMPLEXITY OF ISSUES AND HAVE WITHDRAWN ACTIVE SUPPORT. PRESUMABLY HE WAS REFERRING TO RESULTS OF OULD DADDAH'S RECENT DISCUSSIONS IN LOME (REFTEL A).

4. COMMENT: MAURITANIANS SEEM GENUINELY READY TO DISCUSS WESTERN SAHARA DISPUTE IN DIRECT TALKS INVOLVING ALGERIANS, MOROCCANS, AND ARE BECOMING MORE FLEXIBLE WITH REGARD TO PARTICIPATION BY REPRESENTATIVES OF THE POLISARIO. THEY ARE SUFFICEINTLY REALISTIC TO KNOW THAT ULTIMATE POLITICAL SETTLEMENT CAN ONLY COME FROM DIRECT TALKS AND NOT FROM WARMED OVER RESOLUTIONS IN THE UN OR OAU. ALTHOUGH THE GIRM WOULD DOUBTLESS WELCOME US SUPPORTFOR A SPECIFIC MEDIATION EFFORT. IT HAS
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NOT SUGGESTED THAT US SHOULD BECOME INVOLVED DIRECTLY IN MEDIATION EFFORTS. WE BELIEVE IT WOULD STRONGLY PREFER ARAB OR AFRICANMEDIATORS, PROBABLY IN THAT ORDER, IF INDEED MEDIATORS AREREQUIRED AT ALL.GIRM WOULD PROBABLY PREFER USG TO PLAY A DIFFERENT EVEN MORE IMPORTANT ROLE OF HELPING TO SET THE STAGE FOR DIRECT TALKS BY PRESSURING THE SOVIETS TO TURN OFF SPIGOT ON MILITARY SUPPORT TO ALGERIA/POLISARIO.

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: Z
Capture Date: 01 jan 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: MILITARY ASSISTANCE, FOREIGN INTEREST REPRESENTATION
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 04 apr 1978
Decaption Date: 20 Mar 2014
Decaption Note: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 20 Mar 2014
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1978NOUAKC00900
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Expiration:
Film Number: D780166-0199, D780147-0007
Format: TEL
From: NOUAKCHOTT
Handling Restrictions:
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1978/newtext/t19780495/aaaadctf.tel
Line Count: 103
Litigation Code IDs:
Litigation Codes:
Litigation History:
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Message ID: 63ab09b7-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Office: ACTION SS
Original Classification: SECRET
Original Handling Restrictions: EXDIS
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 2
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: SECRET
Previous Handling Restrictions: EXDIS
Reference: 78 NOUAKCHOTT 781, 78 NOUAKCHOTT 744, 78 ALGIERS 1023, 78 RABAT 1940
Retention: 0
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 27 apr 2005
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review Media Identifier:
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
SAS ID: 3082009
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: ALGERIAN SUGGESTION OF U.S. INVOLVEMENT IN A SAHARA MEDIATION EFFORT
TAGS: MASS, PEPR, AG, MO, MR, FR, SP, SS
To: STATE
Type: TE
vdkgvwkey: odb://SAS/SAS.dbo.SAS_Docs/63ab09b7-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Review Markings:
Sheryl P. Walter
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
20 Mar 2014
Markings: Sheryl P. Walter Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 20 Mar 2014